

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-22 remain in the application and stand rejected.
Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested in light of the following reasons.

Claim Rejection -- 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. According to the last office action, recitation of "in an area of the strip not attached to either of the first solar cell or the second solar cell" raises an issue of new matter. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

FIGS. 5A and 5B show an interconnect lead 202B, which is a specific embodiment of the interconnect lead 202 shown in FIG. 2 (specification, page 8, lines 4-13). The middle portion of the interconnect lead 202B includes slits 501. As can be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art, when the interconnect lead 202B is used to interconnect solar cells 220 in FIG. 2, at least the middle portion (i.e., the non-connecting portion) of the interconnect lead 202B will be providing strain relief between adjacent solar cells 220 and constitutes a portion of the interconnect lead 202B not attach to either of the solar cells. It is respectfully submitted that this is explicitly clear simply by looking at the interconnect lead 202B at FIGS. 5A and 5B and its use as an embodiment of interconnect lead 202 in FIG. 2 as disclosed in the specification as originally filed.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-3, 6-12, 16-18, and 20-22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Publication No. 2002/0059952 by Shimada ("Shimada") in

view of U.S. Patent No. 5,468,652 to Gee ("Gee") and U.S. Patent No. 6,315,575 to Kajimoto ("Kajimoto"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

According to the last office action, Kajimoto teaches that an interconnector with a stress relief portion opening of a mesh structure is known, citing to Kajimoto FIGS. 1A, 1B, 2, and 3. It is respectfully submitted that the mesh structure cited in Kajimoto has the mesh in "the connecting portion of the interconnector," not in an area of the strip not attached to either of the first solar cell or the second solar cell (Kajimoto, col. 1, lines 41-48; 55-59. That is, the mesh in Kajimoto's interconnector is in the portion that is attached to the solar cell. Kajimoto is explicit that:

The provision of a mesh opening or permeable hole at the connecting portion of the interconnector will become the cause of crushing the mesh opening or permeable hole when welding is effected using a weld electrode of a large width. When pressure is applied with the weld electrode in contact with the residual portion of the mesh opening or permeable hole, i.e. the remaining metal portion for welding, stress concentration occurs at that portion to become the cause of damaging the solar cell. For the reliability of the weld portion, welding was effected on one connecting portion between the interconnector and the solar cell using a small weld electrode of a small width. If the area of the connecting portion of the connector is increased, welding must be effected many times on one connecting portion when a small weld electrode is used. A tremendous amount of time will be required for welding to degrade the productivity.

Kajimoto, col. 2, lines 10-24 (emphasis added)

Similarly, Kajimoto's notches 4 are in the connecting portions 2 and 3 (Kajimoto, col. 4, lines 4-22, 23-37). The connecting portions 2 and 3 are portions of the interconnector attached to the solar cell. It is thus respectfully submitted that Kajimoto, and other references of record, does not teach or suggest a plurality of perforations between solar cells. This is because Kajimoto pertains to welding of connecting portions of an interconnect to solar cells.

Independent claims 1, 11, 17, and 20 are thus patentable over the combination of Shimada, Gee, and Kajimoto.

The dependent claims are rejected as being unpatentable over the combination of Shimada, Gee, and Kajimoto and another combination that includes U.S. Patent No.

4,321,418 to Dran et al. ("Dran"). The dependent claims are patentable at least for depending on patentable base claims.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, it is believed that claims 1-4, 6-14, and 16-22 are in condition for allowance.

In light of the relatively long prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112 for any questions or to clear up matters of claim construction.

If for any reason an insufficient fee has been paid, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the insufficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-2427.

Respectfully submitted,
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